

HerdWork Mentor Toolkit — Best Practices for Effective Mentorship

A. Set the Stage

- Co-design expectations: roles, time mix (in-person/remote/interviews), communication norms, confidentiality.
- Ethics upfront: emphasize story ownership, privacy, and consent for sharing.

B. Guide the Learning Process

- Require reflection: journals + pocket notebook; begin check-ins with reflective prompts.
- Normalize teachable mistakes: share your own recovery stories; praise thoughtful risk-taking.
- Spotlight peer learning: encourage observation and learning from colleagues and community.

C. Build Skills & Confidence

- Name the skill in the moment; co-write résumé bullets.
- Practice networking: role-play intros and debrief events.
- Public sharing: substitute mini-presentations for quizzes; invite audiences.

D. Care for the Relationship

- Psychological safety: invite questions; model humility; acknowledge your learning curve.
- Context and compassion: help interpret difficult interactions; meet people where they are.

E. Simple Tools You Can Use Tomorrow

- Weekly check-in (15–20 min): Wins → Challenges → One lesson → One goal → One ask.
- Reflection prompts: Who did you learn from this week and how? What story is not yours to share? What skill emerged?
- Showcase plan (5 minutes, 1 slide): Problem → What we tried → What we learned → What's next.

Reflection Exercise #1: Apprenticeships

- Think of a time when you learned something important outside school.
- Describe the context, skills gained, and what you brought that made you open to learning.
- Identify who helped guide that learning.
- Mentor and intern complete and share together.

Reflection Exercise #2: Cloud of Witnesses

- Reflect on a person or group who inspired your understanding of contributing to the common good.
- Describe their work, how they achieved it, and the impact they had.
- Explain what you learned from them about contributing to the world.
- Mentor and intern share reflections together.

Other Best Practices

- Journaling, memory bank, code of ethics, appreciative inquiry, skill mirroring, structured reflection time.

Intern Development Goals

- Learn how to network
- Learn how to market themselves
- Develop an appreciation for purpose of the work
- Transition from being a consumer of knowledge to a producer of knowledge
- Create good routines
- Develop reasonable expectations
- Realize the value of relationship building
- Gain confidence
- Realize the value of non-profits
- Gain an expanded worldview
- Understand that they can make an impact
- Have a sense of accomplishment
- Meet a person who inspires them
- Bridge what they have learned over time through their studies to the field
- Recognize their transferable skills
- Embrace mentorship
- Become aware of the WV cultural infrastructure including community foundations and non-profits
- Look beyond behaviors and understand where a person is coming from
- Make mistakes and learn from them

- Acknowledge that life is a process
- Identify what they know how to do, and that those skills and traits are transferable

How Mentors Can Support This Development

- Provide structured networking opportunities and model introductions
- Help interns articulate skills and strengths in real time
- Connect daily tasks to mission and purpose
- Invite interns to present insights, not just complete tasks
- Co-create routines and expectations
- Affirm growth and confidence through regular feedback
- Introduce interns to nonprofit partners and community leaders
- Highlight community impact of their contributions
- Support reflective practice and journaling
- Normalize mistakes as part of the learning process
- Guide interns in identifying transferable skills
- Discuss WV cultural infrastructure and its interconnected organizations